

Dear Ms. Downes,

I am a Durham resident and a New Haven student, and am truly disappointed in the DEP's CT Diesel Plan Draft. The status quo must not be an option on diesel, if we are to improve our state's air quality, our citizens' health, and reduce CT's greenhouse gas emissions. The DEP must guarantee that all dirty diesel vehicles be replaced with new and cleaner vehicles as soon as possible, and pollution control devices must be installed on existing vehicles.

In particular, I am most concerned about the DEP's lack of action on cleaning up school buses. Diesel school buses put our state's children at risk, especially as pollution inside the buses is frequently several times higher than outside. Asthma rates are higher in CT than in almost all other states, and this illness prevents young children from living active lives.

I believe that the DEP should retire the dirtiest buses that are from 1993 and older and require pollution controls to keep emissions from the engine from entering the passenger compartment of the buses. Additionally, DEP should mandate the retrofitting of all existing buses with a basic pollution control like diesel oxidation catalysts (DOCs) to reduce particulate matter by September 1, 2010.

The same methods should protect our urban areas and public transit users, by cleaning up our transit buses. Encouraging our citizens to use public transportation will clean up our air and our traffic jams, but putting these citizens at risk from diesel pollution will only make matters worse.

Finally, I believe that the CT DEP needs to help our cities with these improvements, especially those that will be most expensive. Additionally, a Diesel Clean-Up Fund should be created to help private diesel owners retrofit or replace their dirtier engines. CT should follow Texas and California and create a fund to clean up diesel engines, and should consider funding it using fuel taxes or other user fees.

I appreciate your consideration of this issue, and I hope to see an improved Diesel Plan in the coming year.

Happy holidays, and I wish you the best in the coming year.

Sincerely,
Caroline Howe
CT Coordinator of Climate Campaign
Yale University, Class of 2007
Durham, CT